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ABSTRACT

This collection represents the record of a summer institute held in 1989 at the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth (Minnesota) in which 40 elementary school teachers and 4 college instructors read and discussed American fiction centering on the theme of initiation/challenge/change. After a beginning section which presents background information, the collection offers the following articles: "Life, Literature and Literary Criticism: Some Reflections" (John P. Schifsky); "Five Answers to a Frowning Question" (Leo J. Hertzel); "Participants' Responses"; "Literature and Ethics in a Sixth Grade Classroom" (Cary Werner); "Confronting Our Beliefs: Literature and Human Experience" (Robert McKeown); and "Teaching Elementary School Children: Some Personal Values" (Jeanne Webb). The collection concludes with a list of the institute participants and an evaluator's report. (SAM)

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Growing Up American

A RECORD

Edited by
Leo J. Hertzel
John P. Schifsky

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Growing Up American

Record of a gathering of elementary school teachers at the College of St. Scholastica in the summer of 1989 for the purpose of reading and discussing American literature

Edited by

Leo J. Hertzel

John P. Schifsky

The College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minnesota, 1990

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During the summer of 1989, forty elementary school teachers and four college instructors met for three weeks on the campus of the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota, to read and discuss American fiction centering on the theme initiation/challenge/change.

This book is a partial record of those meetings and their effects.

Table of Contents

Growing Up American: The Institute 1

Works Read . . . 4, Guest Presenters . . . 5, Support Staff . . . 6, Institute Faculty . . . 7

Life, Literature and Literary Criticism: Some Reflections *John P. Schifsky* 9

Five Answers to a Frowning Question *Leo J. Hertzel* 15

Participants' Responses 23

Mary Johns . . . 24, Laurie Wig . . . 27, Jeannie Pavlik . . . 29, Pat Lund . . . 31, Joann Dukart . . . 33, Carol Hieb . . . 33, Kathryn Lewis . . . 35, Roberta Hendrickson . . . 37, Lorraine Braun . . . 38, Julie Dermody . . . 39, Rose Prunty . . . 40, Peter Hulke . . . 41, Sandra Barrett . . . 42, Marcia DeGroote . . . 44, Dorothy Roder . . . 45, Jill LaBatte . . . 45, Johanna Martin . . . 46, Barbara Nemec . . . 46, Joanne Goodrich . . . 47, Donna Swenson . . . 48, Marjorie Harr . . . 49, Carole Perry . . . 50, Estelle Krzykowski . . . 50, Paulette Ozzello . . . 51, Ruth Boldan . . . 52, Susan Balke . . . 53, Shirlie Moysis . . . 55, June Perry . . . 55, Diane Schaum . . . 56, Rose Edington . . . 56

Literature and Ethics in a Sixth Grade Classroom *Cary Werner* 59

Confronting Our Beliefs: Literature and Human Experience *Robert McKeown* 67

Teaching Elementary School Children: Some Personal Values *Jeannie Webb* 75

Institute Participants 83

Evaluator's Report 89

The Institute

Growing Up American was a summer institute in the humanities for elementary school teachers held on the campus of the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota, June 11 through June 30, 1989. Through reading, discussion, writing, and lectures by the instructors, forty elementary teachers from the upper Midwest studied twenty-four pieces of American prose fiction centering on the theme initiation/challenge/change.

Participating teachers were chosen from nearly 140 applicants from Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota, and North Dakota. Thirty-five of the teachers were women.

A one-day follow-up meeting to explore effects of the institute on the teachers' classroom activities was held at Hotel Luxeford Suites, Minneapolis, Minnesota, January 27, 1990.

Two broad purposes shaped the institute activities:

a. *To enhance participants' skills in reading literary texts.* Lectures, discussions, and writing assignments encouraged the teachers to read fiction with a heightened awareness of multiple levels of ambiguity and meaning.

Some lectures emphasized analysis of literary structure with an accompanying New Critical vocabulary as one method of approaching meaning. Learning activities also stressed the importance of reader response to the full richness of the reading process. While these activities incorporated elements from different and even incompatible critical theories, the institute was not focused on esoteric matters of literary theory but rather on effective ways to heighten teachers' abilities to uncover the riches of experience contained in fiction.

b. *To further participants' awareness of the significance of* initiation/challenge/change as a major theme in American experience. In the fiction examined, characters confronted challenge, dilemmas, ambiguous situations for which they had no immediately effective responses. The characters, both young people and adults, displayed value systems formed by previous experience, the teachings of others, or directions from social institutions. In varying degrees of severity, the value systems left those characters unprepared to deal with the challenges of new and complicated situations. Coming from varieties of American cultural and ethnic traditions, in different times and places, the characters tested the beliefs that heretofore were their foundations for decisions. They responded to these challenges in widely different ways: some were successful and grew; some were uncertain and floundered; some failed and were destroyed. The teachers examined these challenges and responses as representative of a common human experience essential to growth and particularly the American experience of forging a new mixture of principles out of a widely varied blend of traditions and creeds.

Exploration of this theme of initiation and its examination of values under stress is a particularly appropriate activity for

teachers who deal every day with children who themselves are undergoing initiations into a challenging society.

Although teachers did participate in several structured discussions on the relationship between institute content and their classroom work, the institute was not intended as a training course in elementary classroom instruction or in specific content for classroom work. The institute focused on literary texts. However, close reading and careful thought on those texts exerted a pervasive though oblique influence on teachers' attitudes and actions when they returned to their classrooms. (See pages 23 to 82.)

In addition, the institute produced a variety of outcomes of which the following are representative:

> A sense of collegial identity through which teachers became members of a learning group and learned from the various responses of their peers as well as from the more formal, structured institute activities.
>
> An opportunity for teachers to talk about their readings and their responses in an environment where talk is encouraged as a means of intellectual discovery as well as communication.
>
> An opportunity for teachers to listen to their peers exploring complex literary statements and see themselves in the context of the responses of others.
>
> An opportunity to explore one part of the diversity in cultural backgrounds in our nation's past with an introduction to the constant presence of value challenges as a necessary experience.

Works Read

Nathaniel Hawthorne	"Young Goodman Brown"
Mark Twain	*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (selections)
Bret Harte	"The Luck of Roaring Camp"
William D. Howells	"Editha"
Sherwood Anderson	"Death in the Woods"
Ernest Hemingway	"The Killers"
Katherine Anne Porter	"The Grave"
Carson McCullers	*The Member of the Wedding*
Tillie Olson	"O Yes"
John Steinbeck	"Flight"
Flannery O'Connor	"Good Country People"
N. Scott Momaday	*House Made of Dawn* (selections)
Ralph Ellison	"Battle Royal" from *Invisible Man*
J. D. Salinger	*The Catcher in the Rye* (selections)
John Updike	"A & P"
Irwin Shaw	"The Girls in Their Summer Dresses"
Nathanael West	*Miss Lonelyhearts*
Gail Godwin	"Over the Mountain"
Joyce Carol Oates	"Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"
Maxine Hong-Kingston	*The Woman Warrior*
Toni Cade Bambara	"A Girl's Story"
Ann Beattie	"Secrets and Surprises"
	Selected pieces of minimalist fiction

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Guest Presenters

Maggie Scheibe
Media Generalist Program Director
College of St. Scholastica
"Initiation and Children's Literature"

Wendell Glick
Emeritus Professor of English
University of Minnesota-Duluth
"Geese Flying South," a reading
"Modern Poetry," a reading

Julie Ahasay
Public Relations Director
College of St. Scholastica
"Contemporary Literature Written by Women"

Carol Bly
Author, Instructor
University of Minnesota-Minneapolis
"Readers' Response to Literature"

Carl Gawboy
Bilingual Specialist, American Indian Studies
College of St. Scholastica
Comments on Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*

Van Pancake
Assistant Professor, Psychology Department
College of St. Scholastica
"Transition Literature and Developmental Stages"

Joseph Maiolo
Author, English Department Chair
University of Minnesota-Duluth
Short story reading with comments

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★ ★ ★

Institute Faculty

Rebecca J. Ardren, Reading Curriculum Specialist K-12, Duluth Public Schools

•*Leo J. Hertzel*, Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Superior and Adjunct Professor of Languages and Literature, College of St. Scholastica

•*John P. Schifsky*, Associate Professor, Department of Languages and Literature, College of St. Scholastica

Elizabeth A. Stich, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, College of St. Scholastica

•Co-directors

★ ★ ★

John P. Schifsky

Life, Literature and Literary Criticism: Some Reflections

I have, from the period I was a high school student, loved to read and talk about literature, and that love has grown with time. Perhaps as a result of my traditional liberal arts education, I have generally expected works of literature to teach and delight, an assumption inspiring both classical and renaissance writers. Literature, I believe, generally has a message for us as readers, sometimes direct and more immediately apparent and sometimes only obliquely implied, a message about the quality of human experience, about what it means to be a human being, about the way we should or shouldn't relate to our fellows, about the effect on self and other humans of our desires, wishes and dreams, about our relative position on this planet. Literature should also be delightful, a joy to read. The language each writer uses should be bright and alive. The organization should be engaging, demanding reader involvement and texts themselves should provide fresh in-

sights, or reaffirm insights gained in the past. There is little or no question in my mind that literature has something fundamental to do with life, and that a life without literature is in some way impoverished, less than complete.

These attitudes strike some of my acquaintances as quaint, curious, condescending. Whatever, I do believe that literature has something fundamental to do with life and it is for this reason that I worked to make Growing Up American a reality. Much to my delight, the participants' wholehearted, enthusiastic response to the literature, which was the institute's subject, affirmed my bias.

The forty participating teachers arrived with some misgivings, not the least of which was a concern about being able to read correctly. By correctly let me suggest that they assumed, probably on the basis of previous school experience, that there was a right way to read a text, as well as any number of wrong ways. Perhaps their previous experience included particular incidents where it had been made clear their way of reading was incorrect, perhaps not. I do believe, however, that at least initially many of them looked to the presenters as the experts, the source of right answers about literature, the individuals who were really knowledgeable about what the author meant to say.

Such an attitude, unfortunately, puts literature teachers on a pedestal, implies there is a single correct interpretation of a piece of literature. This attitude does not deny literature has a message, but certainly limits its potential to delight, particularly if only a few specialists really know how to read a work of literature intelligently and the larger mass of readers is anxiously concerned to follow their lead. This was not an attitude Leo and I wished to reinforce. Such an approach really divorces literature from life, makes it the object of specialist attention, by implication demanding intelligence and energy most people don't have, or can only hope to emulate in very limited ways. Yet the fundamental assumption from which the institute arose was that literature is important because it says something about life, that literature is potentially enriching

and that time spent reading literature will lead to a heightened awareness, an increased sensitivity to the complexity, ambiguity and subtlety of the initiation process (our subject), a process which has shaped us as a nation and individually.

Whatever the source of their initial misgivings, the teachers began to lose them as they immersed themselves in the first readings, Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and Harte's "The Luck of Roaring Camp." To be sure, their response was tentative at first, and in some cases puzzled, as they wondered if their personal reactions were "the right ones." But we (Leo, Becky, Liz, and John) made it clear from the beginning that we were not there to provide answers, that as readers with a significant amount of human experience, the participants would gain their own insights from the stories, and those insights had value. We also realized that this emphasis on the importance of reader response could lead easily to situations in which anyone's opinion about the story was as valid as any other, a situation probably as distasteful and frustrating as that in which only one person had all the answers about how a story should be read. So we suggested that our readers pay close attention to the text, and spent considerable time reading the texts with them, modeling responses based on the text. This direction and process proved successful, I believe, and the teachers came prepared to talk about their reactions to the readings making specific references to the text to support the position they took, or in questioning the reaction of another reader. The stories came alive. Faith was real; Young Goodman Brown a familiar if discomfiting character; Holden a teenager few sympathized with; Frankie a young girl in a heartwarmingly familiar dilemma. For our participants, the literature they read, the characters they met, the dilemmas that these characters faced were as real as their own life experiences.

The discussions were not limited to the classroom. At lunch and breaks, during walks, at night, even in the rest rooms, the teachers talked about the stories, and the characters sometimes seemed to be living in the dormitory with them. Some participants received written notes from fictional characters.

Editha was alive and well on the campus. As was the Luck of Roaring Camp. And this level of interest and personal involvement was consistent for all three weeks, despite a taxing schedule of activities. The readings, the literature, the characters and their lives, were at one and the same time the central focus of the group's interest and efforts, the cohesive force bonding forty separate personalities, and the source of its energy, vitality and excitement.

Gradually, the participants realized that not only could they read with a considerable amount of perception and sensitivity, but that their opinions, insights and hunches had both legitimacy and value. At one point, in a discussion in the second week, several participants were openly skeptical of an interpretation. Afterwards, talking of their reaction, Leo and I realized that they were learning the lesson we hoped to teach, to trust their readings of literary texts.

Considering the degree of our participants' involvement with the texts we discussed, the institute was dramatic affirmation of the value of the reader-response approach to literature. The more traditional, New Critical approach, alluded to earlier, emphasizes the importance of the literary text, in effect demoting the reader to a secondary status whose task is to puzzle out the meaning hidden there by the canny author. The implication is that there is one meaning more correct than others, and those who are sufficiently acute and sensitive will find it. Most readers cannot. But the reader-response approach posits the primacy of the text, and suggests that both author and reader co-create meaning. The author provides insights, ideas, organization, language, etc., and readers bring their insights and experience so that the act of reading is analogous to an art of creation, the text taking on for each reader shape and significance it has not had for others.

One story the participants read in the final week drew particularly vocal assertive responses. "The Girls in Their Summer Dresses" sparked heated, prolonged exchanges as the readers brought their own experiences, biases and values to an ambivalent text, while we instructors made comments and asked

questions and reminded them that they should pay attention to the text. The discussion went on for several hours, and in the end, the group had split into several factions, each certain that its reading was the correct one. What was remarkable about that experience was the intensive, personal interaction with the text, and the sense that the various interpretations had legitimacy; there was not a need to agree that one reading was the correct one, or the one the author intended. The teachers realized, in a dramatic way, both the legitimacy and potential of the reader-response approach as they argued, listened, reconsidered and objected. The literature was alive for them, the characters recognizable, their dilemmas familiar. That same vitality was both a challenge, and the source of the interest and excitement which characterized the institute for all those involved.

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Leo J. Hertzel

Five Answers to a Frowning Question

Here is an entry from the diary of a 19th century Chinese man named Pei Chi'ing-chiao who watched British military units occupy and then ravage several cities along the coast of China during the Opium War: "When the English foreigners began their havoc in Fuhkien and Chekian, I expressed my indignation by writing a set of nine poems."

Living where literary knowledge and expressive skills were the foundations of government (and thus all power), Pei trusted nine poems as a forceful response to British military violence. For him, poetry had the moral power of retribution; poems were proper responses to barbarians for their brutality.

Over the years, few Americans have shared Pei's belief in poetry as a suitable answer to the bullies of the world. During the Vietnam war (and to a lesser extent other military conflicts) some Americans did use literature as a form of protest—Robert Bly's "Driving through Minnesota during the Hanoi Bombings" is an apt example—but such use was an unusual exception to the popular national creed which advocates a muscular

response to physical difficulty. Literature as a real force in the active world has never been a popular idea in America.

I was thinking about literature and action recently. After I described Growing Up American to a friend, she looked up, frowned, and said, "But why literature? Why did you want those teachers to read literature?" My friend teaches writing at a large Eastern university. Child of her world, she views reading literature as a harmless pastime, an innocent recreation like bowling or knitting. For her, literature has nothing to do with the real world of science and action and control. Her "Why literature?" was a polite way of saying something like, "For heaven's sake, if you are going to get a bunch of teachers together for three weeks' hard work in the summer, why not have them do something useful like read psychology or take nature trips out in the woods?"

This friend asks good questions. Why *did* we expend the energy of forty American teachers day and night for three weeks reading, writing, and talking about the troubles of imaginary people? What has that stuff got to do with the struggles of life?

The remainder of this piece of writing offers some approaches to answers.

1. During the time of the institute last summer, I received a letter from another friend, this one a man who teaches literature at a small private college in the North Country. He had been thinking about his work, and he offered some reflections.

"Unlike Matthew Arnold, unlike the Marxists," he wrote, "I don't want literature to do anything, to grow up and get a job. To read, comment, and escape unscathed is my ideal . . . Literature—the writing and reading of it—is a kind of cold blooded, heartless affair. Each day I see in front of my lectern people who are worried sick about dying relatives, unpaid bills, and unrequited love. You would think that I might be good enough to shut up about literature and just leave these people in peace. But I am not. Relentlessly I insist that they forget about those problems, that they take more seriously the

problems of people who never existed. And, it is surprising how willing they are to do so."

This is an attractive statement. Get rid of your Puritan guilt feelings, my friend says. Enjoy the luxury of action with no consequences: read, fantasize. Spend time in the world of imagination where happenings have no effects, where you enjoy the prerogatives of God, the pleasure of watching and speculating and marveling at the incredible variety in human passion and decision, and then, afterwards, at your leisure, unbruised, return to the ordinary world. There is purity, an innocence and a sensitivity here that is wonderfully appealing. Amidst the stink and pain of life, he says, retreat for a while to a place where pain does not hurt.

This is, I believe, the way many literature professors I have known over the years think about literature. I see some of them now in their later years, retired, a cap of fine white hair, growing bonsai or feeding their dogs, after a long lecturing career enjoying a peaceful time. I sometimes wonder if they ever wake up in the middle of the night questioning, asking, What if things had been different?—like Spencer Brydon in Henry James' "The Jolly Corner," "'Where have I been,' he vaguely wailed, 'where have I been?'"—feeling that just possibly they made a mistake, lecturing for a lifetime about the troubles of imaginary people, encouraging students to daydream, when they all might have been doing something useful in the real world. It is the same question my Eastern university friend asked me, Is this sufficient? There are doubts.

2. This is a quotation from a talk given by Terry Eagleton to a group of English teachers gathered at the University of Nottingham in 1985. Eagleton is a respected literary theorist, critic, historian.

"(Literature) we are told, teaches us . . . to be—let me rehearse some of the cherished terms—sensitive, imaginative, responsive, sympathetic, creative, perceptive, reflective. Notice the resounding intransitivity of all of these familiar shibboleths. The task of the moral technology of literature is to

produce an historically peculiar form of human subject who is sensitive, receptive, imaginative and so on . . . about nothing in particular. This notion would have been utterly unintelligible to Aristotle, Saint Paul, Thomas Aquinas and Samuel Johnson . . ."

This is an attractive statement. What Eagleton is not saying is at least as important as what he says. He is telling writers and literary academics that the luxury of literary sensitivity just for its own sake is slothful self-indulgence if they neglect the needs of the suffering, the poor, and the mistreated throughout the world. In his view, literature has social obligations. Eagleton says in the central traditions of Western culture (Aristotle, Saint Paul, Thomas Aquinas) literature was always expected to do something, to serve a useful purpose. It is only recently in the history of the West that some people argue that serious literature is acceptable as play.

Eagleton answers my friend who said he wanted literature to do nothing. Doing nothing is an overrefined copout, says Eagleton. To have value, it must effect change. As long as it does nothing but create idle pleasure for a few sensitive academics and their students, it is as sterile and as useless as they are.

Eagleton has many followers these days, people who say our society (and educational institutions) deliberately emasculates literature, rendering it pretty and harmless in order to insure its impotence.

Eagleton has an attractive theory. Yet, when writers have tried to put it into practice, at least in recent times, the results are not very satisfying. Most of the literature of social protest of the 1930s, for example, is readable now only as nostalgic curiosity. And who can reread the anti-Vietnam War prose of the 1960s—Norman Mailer's 1968 *The Armies of the Night*, for example? Literature of social commentary in this century generally has not been very interesting, though writers like Nathanael West or James Cozzens or Nikki Giovanni provide significant exceptions. There are arcane explanations for this failure ranging from the idea that in a pluralistic society

writers lack a common base of belief to the idea that crusaders must ignore the subtle demands of form and, thus, sacrifice all hope of lasting appeal.

But then, not everyone believes an important piece of writing needs lasting appeal.

3. This is a quotation from Laurie Wig of Growing Up American. She writes about the effects of reading initiation literature during the three weeks of the June institute. ". . . we, with the others, discussed families, children, parents and parenting and I thought, 'WOW!' What an impact lit has on us—it opens our minds, thoughts, actions and mouths—it helps us sort out our feelings, compare our actions with others, helps us feel better about our lives or helps us find new avenues to change our lives. This lit and our discussing it with each other does not just stop there, it works into our daily lives and I find it amazing that after a few days, we are able to share so many personal situations . . ."

This is an attractive statement. It fits somewhere between the positions of number 1 and number 2 and says literature can be useful by raising our level of caring, by making us more sensitive to one another's needs and hopes, by increasing our ability to communicate with and comfort one another. It is an intensely personal usefulness that Laurie Wig describes.

By taking us into the consciousness of imaginary people, she says, literature heightens our awareness of the personal needs, the yearning for shared experience, which we all feel. Literature, then, makes us better friends, kinder people.

One generalization we can safely make, from Pei through the three other statements, is that literature is used by different people in different times and places for very different purposes. From Pei to Wig is a large distance in both time and culture and yet each gives a perspective we can respect. Whatever answer we give the friend who asked, "Why Literature?" it must be fluid enough to include wide variations.

I will add another option to this list of purposes. I chose this not only because it appeals to my own temperament, but also because it poses some interesting problems for teachers.

4. Literature is at its best when it disturbs us, shakes our comfortable view of life, generates friction by probing the surfaces of accepted beliefs and social conventions to expose a rougher, stranger reality beneath.

Because it exposes differences between appearances and reality, good literature is seldom polite. Through exposure of things we conceal or things we have been taught to ignore, it troubles us the way the letters to Miss Lonelyhearts troubled him, tearing away his comfort in the world.

For me, literature at its best is letters to Miss Lonelyhearts.

"The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life," wrote Henry James in one of the early defenses of realism. I think his defense is even more appropriate now than it was when he wrote it. We live in a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate illusion from reality. "In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible," wrote George Orwell. We are soaked with waves of electronic images, the words and pictures of highly sophisticated opinion making forces, advertisers of every sort: Buy our toothpaste; join our cause; fight our war; send money; love this God.

Literature offers alternative perceptions. Writers want us to acknowledge truths the rest of society would like us to avoid, truths we too may prefer to ignore in the midst of superficial optimism and technological distractions. William Dean Howells in "Editha," for example, tells us to scrape beneath the slogans of hollow patriotism to experience the pain beneath (that can be a troubling message, especially for a teacher). Flannery O'-Connor in "Good Country People" suggests (among other provocative thoughts) that the romantic myth of rural innocence will not stand scrutiny. Maxine Hong-Kingston tells us (among other provocative things) there are effective methods of teaching that do not fit our current edpsych

models. In all of these cases, writers challenge the ideas that popular opinion or institutions advocate and it is this challenge that is for me the best answer to the, "Why Literature?" question.

At its best, literature makes us think, doubt, expanding our view of the world to include possibilities beyond the safely obvious.

Expansion of the mind is not without some danger. It causes friction, sometimes friction within as a reader wrestles with earlier perceptions and clashing new ones. Sometimes the friction is with friends and colleagues as we argue about differences between appearance and reality. Sometimes the friction is between the reader and society as he or she comes to realize that accepted belief can be just a layered veneer.

Good literature is rarely polite. It wakes us up.

So, literature for me is serious business. It is not that sweet New England voice of Whittier or Bryant whispering "all is well" even as the earth shakes. It is Ahab raging against brute fate or Whitman confessing his mortality.

There are difficulties with this approach. It leaves no good place for beauty. And it certainly can cause teachers a lot of trouble. Would Goody Cloyce have asked Young Goodman Brown to read "Young Goodman Brown"?

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Participants' Responses

Growing Up American focused on close reading of literary texts, emphasizing the importance of literary craft in the success of a written piece. The institute also emphasized the richness and variety that come when readers respond freely to a written work, allowing their own experiences to enhance the meaning. While these two approaches to literary study can, in theory, be contradictory, in practice they often compliment one another and both are especially valuable for teachers who want to make literature interesting and even important in the lives of children in their classrooms.

Seven months after the completion of the institute, the participating teachers wrote about ways this study of literature had affected their thinking. These teachers actively practice their craft in classrooms across the four states and teaching is important in their lives. Thus, these quotations from their reports generally emphasize literature's influence on their classroom presence. But an attentive reader of these state-

ments will not miss the theme of broad personal enrichment resting just behind the descriptions of professional utility.

Note: Quotations are reprinted from all of the teachers' works except those that could not be reproduced in print form.

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"AS AN ONGOING PROJECT, I HAVE DECIDED TO BEGIN A bibliography of children's books with an initiation theme. I will identify the theme and then see if the children show a readiness for understanding when I read the book to them.

> *My Friend Jacob*, Lucille Clifton, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1980, Thomas DiGrazia, illus.

Sam, an eight-year old boy, and his next door neighbor, Jacob are best friends. Jacob is seventeen-years old and retarded, but it does not interfere with their friendship. The boys have mutual respect for each other, and recognize each others talents.

> *The Monster Under My Bed*, Suzanne Gruber, New Jersey, Troll Associates, 1985, Stephanie Britt, illus.

At bedtime, a little bear becomes worried about what may be hiding under his bed in the dark. He calls upon his mother to help him find out what is there, and discovers that it is his cat.

> *The Story of Holly and Ivy*, Rumer Godden, New York, Viking Kestrel, 1985, Barbara Cooney, illus.

A little girl from an orphanage sets off at Christmas time in search of a grandmother, which she knows does not exist. Eventually, she finds a couple to become grandparents to her and we hope they live happily ever after. The girl shows resourcefulness and determination throughout the story.

Pig Pig Grows Up, David McPhail, New York, Scholastic, 1980.

Pig Pig wanted to be a baby forever, and nothing his parents said could make him give up his baby ways and grow up. When faced with a real emergency, however, Pig Pig made a decision and prevented a catastrophe.

Tales of a Gambling Grandma, Dayal Kaur Khalsa, New York, Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1986.

This is a story of the special relationship of a girl and her grandmother. The girl was surrounded by love and understanding with her grandmother, and even when her grandmother died, she remembered the warmth and the love they shared. She knew how to mourn and then remember the joy that they had shared.

Hey, Al, Arthur Yorinks, New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986, Richard Egielski, illus.

Al and his faithful dog live and work together in the city. They become disenchanted with their boring life and wish for a more adventurous life. After a stint on a tropical island, they realize that their old life is the best.

Toony and the Midnight Monster, Ruth Brook, New Jersey, Troll Assoc., 1988, Vala Kondo, illus.

Toony and her friends are having a sleep-over, and she has nightmares, and is lonesome for her family. Her friends comfort and support her with stories of how they manage to go to sleep thinking about happy things so that they will not have nightmares. They move close to her so that she will not be lonesome anymore.

The Patchwork Quilt, Valerie Flourney, New York, Dial Books for Young Readers, 1985, Jerry Pinkney, illus.

Tanya and her grandmother work together on a quilt that uses scraps from the family members' clothing. As they work, Tanya begins to see the importance of family ties and traditions. She helps her mother to understand this also when grandmother becomes seriously ill, and her mother has to help finish the quilt.

Swan Sky, Tejima, New York, Philomel Books, 1988.

This is a story about death. The swans have a hard time accepting the fact that a sick swan will not get better, and be able to return to the north with them. They stay with the swan until she dies and then go north. They mourn on their flight and then in the spring sunshine and light, when they feel the warmth, their mourning is over.

Badger's Parting Gifts, Susan Varley, New York, Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1984.

Badger was old and wise, he knew he would soon die. He was not worried about death, but he was concerned about how his friends would deal with his death, so he prepared them ahead of time.

—*Mary Johns*

"IN JUNE, I WROTE . . . WHEN SCHOOL STARTS, I WILL reflect upon the literature in my classroom and the impact it has on my students. I want them to take ownership in the literature that I read to them and in what they read to themselves. I want them to see it as a safe place to take a stand in what they believe; a place to work through rough problems, and initiations of life. I want them to see the parallels between their lives and the lives of the characters in stories.

I wanted reading for them to be like it had turned out for me. But, I also tried to remember what John had said, "The goal of the institute isn't to take this information to the classroom. The hope is that you will read literature carefully, think about it, and internalize it, and some way, some day, the implications of that will result in some implications in the classroom." I decided to use what I had been feeling, what I had learned to help them reach a similar connection to the one I had gained. I kept re-reading my notes on what Becky said. Reading wasn't just decoding and comprehension. It wasn't really reading until they had thought about what they had read and taken a stand by their thoughts. My job was to give them the skills to decode and comprehend, but not to tell them how to respond or feel. I was also to help them respond.

I needed to take time to do just that. I decided to set aside a block of time each day to read to them and discuss, evaluate and judge literature, with details to support those ideas. When school started, I realized that eight-year-olds were not going to be able to do exactly what I had planned. I thought last summer that we could journal write, but they were not ready for that. So, up to now, everything we have done has been oral, but I think we have had a good start with our discussions.

I started out slowly reading stories for pleasure, more spectator reading. I felt that we needed to get to know each other a little better before we could share personal feelings and thoughts. A relationship had to be formed. (We have not lived and eaten together everyday like we did in Duluth.) Even today, after eight weeks, I know that all of my students are not yet comfortable sharing personal matters. So, we have been

reading for "fun," but have discussed why characters acted or said things in a certain way; and I have asked them to put themselves in certain situations and asked what they would do. They probably feel the space between themselves and the literature, but I am trying to lessen the gap.

They are very young, but have experienced much more than I did at that age. Growing Up American is difficult; many are from single parent homes, one has been physically abused, many are low-functioning, many deal with poverty. It is amazing to me to see how optimistic eight-year-olds still are. It is my hope that they will be able to hold on to that positive attitude as they grow and come across more initiation experiences. Maybe through literature they will find a safe place to explore a sometimes unfriendly world. Right now, they read for "fun" or work, but I think I am bringing them closer to internalizing it, making it their own . . . .

My hopes for the future for my students and myself include the following:

1. We will continue reading a variety of books and share what we have read.

2. We will delve more deeply into literature and ask, "why?"

3. We will try to take ownership in what we read. Why did we read it? What does it mean to us, and why? What from our own experiences brought us to that understanding?

4. We will try to understand other people's points of view. What does that do to ours?

5. We will use reading to help us see that problems are not always personal, but universal and reading can help us solve those problems.

6. We will get beyond the spectator role in reading. We will get involved, look for the truth and enjoy being a part of literature, of life.

—Laurie Wig

"I WANTED, SOMEWHERE IN A REGIMENTED CLASSROOM system, to let the children experience the freedom to think. This was a big decision. I could be creating a monster I could not control. Even if I could control it, would the future teachers in these children's lives accept this, or would it get shot down? It is very true that "A little freedom is a dangerous thing." Once you have a taste of it, you never lose it. This is the atmosphere I wanted to create. Created positively, so the children would enjoy the benefit, but gently so they would have the realization that the world would not always present this 'freedom' as a gift and that many times it must come from within.

The effects of my strategy would be hard to measure. Adults, like me, can voice changes in how they view things. Children just live them. The effects will have to be noted in terms of eagerness, chance taking, questioning and a feeling of self-confidence . . . .

As the year has progressed, I have seen grand things happening. The non-grouping ability levels have automatically given the children an equal footing in the classroom. Discussion on stories and ideas are not limited to small groups, but are all inclusive. The more varied the ideas, the more open the children become. There are still some "right" and "wrong" answers. Vocabulary words will have to be as they are. But beyond the words, into the comprehension, ideas and opinions are all "possibles."

Children's stories, especially in first grade, are pretty one-dimensional. Children want to please the teacher. They want to give the answer the teacher is thinking of, and when the

teacher looks satisfied with an answer, no one thinks any farther. The "one correct answer in the entire universe" has been voiced, so there is not need to pursue. This remarkably stilted idea is perpetuated by the reading book companies who, in the teacher's manual, actually print in parenthesis the correct answer to comprehension questions. Example: "Why didn't the pig want to get out of the boat?"—(He did not want to get wet). Teachers who depend on manuals may feel duty-bound to obtain the answer that some adult story writers have deemed "correct." Sooner or later that answer will surface, but if you are limited to that one answer, you will get one happy student and five more who are afraid to answer the next question because their last answer was different than the accepted one . . . .

Feeling the freedom to express an opinion of your own is an easy thing to accept. Being able to grant that freedom to others however, is a difficult task. Everyone assumes their opinions to be correct. It is very hard to get rid of your own opinion in deference to someone else's. It may be harder still to accept another opinion and have it live side by side with your own. To gain the ability to have freedom of ideas in my classroom it also became necessary for children to grant the freedom to others. We had rules; all ideas were valid. No one was laughed at. Everyone was allowed a chance to express himself. Patience became a necessary virtue when the more adept students learned to accept the varied pace of their classmates.

Using one-to-one/student-to-student activities, children of all ability levels were mixed and matched with each other for oral reading, projects and drills. In this cooperative learning situation students were exposed to the strengths and weaknesses of others, reinforced their own learning by following or leading and often found a peer-to-peer way of creating learning that had never occurred to their teacher.

—Jeannie Pavlik

"THE THIRD EXPERIENCE WITH INITIATION I OBSERVED this fall pertains to the first graders. It is a big step from kindergarten to first grade. The students attend school all day rather than half. There are an increased number of academic and social expectations. They must learn and display appropriate school behavior and face consequences for their choices. School work becomes more difficult and much more independent work is required. More responsibility is placed on the student, like taking care of lunch tickets, organizing materials, listening to and following directions, completing work on time, etc. Children seem to have one foot in the world of fantasy and the other in reality. The expectations for students to function in their learning environment requires them to spend less and less time in the fantasy world and the transition can be difficult for some. They come to first grade at different levels of development and maturity. I see myself as having a role in their initiation process of accepting and adjusting to their new status of first grade students. Although the real effort to succeed rests with them, I believe I have an influence in the process . . . .

I found the three-week experience to be interesting, challenging, exhausting and at times troubling. It was interesting to read the literature, much of which I had not read before, and to participate in open discussions. It was stimulating to hear the many different ideas and perspectives shared. I learned things from the presenters about the history of American Literature, about authors, about varying ways of reading and interpreting. The dominant theme in American Literature became clear to me as we focused on initiation and I reached an awareness about our country, how it is young, void of heritage and long-standing traditions. I came to appreciate the struggles we experience as a nation lacking guidance of forefathers.

In some of the readings the initiation theme was evident and in others it was much more challenging to understand the experience and determine the outcome. It was challenging to express opinions and ideas within a group about literature, myself having a very limited background in the Humanities.

Because of the intensity, I found the three weeks to be exhausting, not so much physically, but mentally and emotionally.

As I reflect on initiation and what it means to me at this time I have the following ideas:

1. The initiation process is personal. What may seem insignificant to one person may be extremely important to another.

2. Guidance from a trusted person is helpful. Being open and willing to accept help is beneficial.

3. Personal backgrounds, perceptions and beliefs influence success and failure.

4. The experience may have long-range effects. In the case of the student teacher, her career may depend on her reaction.

5. The outcome can influence how we view ourselves, feel about ourselves.

6. The outcome may depend on how we view ourselves, feel about ourselves.

7. The outcome may determine how others see us, feel about us, react to us.

8. Living is experiencing continual initiation, some short-term, some long-term.

9. Success or failure may influence future success or failure.

10. Literature can be meaningful in the process.

—Pat Lund

"I BEGAN SLOWLY, WAITING UNTIL THE THIRD WEEK OF school to give myself an opportunity to observe my class and develop a trusting rapport with them. We began our "Reading and Writing Enrichment," as I call it, with a discussion about initiation and its role in our lives. I wanted to use the initiation theme as a focus because of its easy recognition as a theme in literature and in life process . . . .

Being a very academically-oriented group, my class at first was unsure of a discussion and journaling in which everyone's opinion was all right. They would ask me what the answer was, wanting to be right. When I first began these sessions, I noticed the students did not consider them a part of reading class. In fact, some of them would ask, "When are we going to get to our real reading class?" Because this was something new and unfamiliar, and more open-ended than our regular classes, they needed a time to adjust.

Gradually, I am finding my students entering into discussions more readily and really listening to each other's insights. I appreciate the sessions as having real value to myself and my class, stimulating us to share ideas and thoughts together. It's a meeting of teacher and students on common ground, with both of us learning from each other and from literature. What I noticed personally is that I am becoming more open and encouraging of all types of responses in my students, and that I am challenging them to think more and give reasons for their answers.

—*Joann Dukart*

"I WENT HOME CONVINCED THAT IF I WOULD CHANGE MY teaching, I could share with my students that same sense of better understanding of self and of other complex worlds around us. I had only a vague idea of how I would implement the change. I knew I would start with whole language techniques but that I would need to make a lot of changes for my

multigrade room of students for whom English is a second language . . . .

I was absolutely amazed at the way they attacked reading that first week. No longer did the stories seem to be about strange outsiders, but now the stories seemed to be about people they could know and understand. After about a week, I told them that their writing really impressed me and that I wanted them to feel free to write about what they felt was important. I did not care how they organized their writing as long as they wrote about themselves and the reading assignment or the book I was reading aloud or the books they were reading individually. I wanted at least one-half of a notebook page. (They probably average about three-fourths of a page.)

Two of my girls have been labeled as mentally retarded by psychologists. The special education instructor who works with them twice a week for one-half hour each time came to observe the reading class that second week. I did not know she was coming so she knows we did not stage anything special for her. Later she told me that she had never seen students demonstrate the level of comprehension and of higher thinking skills that she saw that day. She was particularly pleased with the response from the two with whom she would be working . . . .

The general consensus is that they like having me read to them more often during the day even if they have to take more homework home. They seemed pleased that they are reading with more expression and they like the SSR time, but find the journals take more time and thinking than the worksheets did. A sixth grader said he likes to write in the journal if he is not in a hurry, but it makes him nervous to have to think when there is other work to do. Then he went on to say that it helps one to think and know your ideas better so it really does not matter how long it takes.

One of my special education girls wrote that she is "practicing reading" a lot now and that the practicing makes her feel good so now she keeps a book to read in her room. She went on to say now she does not read in "bumps." When I asked her

about that she said, "It's not bumps—it makes more sense now."

There were several who wrote of concentrating more on reading now because they would write about it and themselves. Over half wrote that they thought they were learning more now. (The only guidelines given were to write about their feelings regarding the new things they were doing in reading.) I was surprised that only Randy liked the old ways better because Hutterites are usually very suspect of any change. Randy said although the journals take too much time, "We just need to write about the idea of what things are about" and he likes that . . .

My only regret is that I did not do more earlier. I look at the past nine years of teaching and think of the time and energy that could have been better directed. But I am pleased that I have my students for four years. I get a very good feeling when I think of the evaluation I might give in four years for my present fifth graders.

Our classroom is changing and I am excited about it.

—Carol Hieb

"AS WE GOT INTO THE BOOK I EXPLAINED THAT IT COULD be read on several levels, and that Aslan could be considered the Christ figure. When I got to the chapter where Aslan sacrifices himself for Edmund, much to my horror, I discovered that I was going to cry! At the beginning of the year I had explained to my class, as I always do, that I am one of those people who cry easily—I reminded them of how sentimental I am and I felt them relax as I plowed on to the end! I really did not feel like teaching reading skills after the chapter was completed so I asked them to write the next chapter for themselves. I have never seen students go into a writing assignment as enthusiastically as they did that day. You could have heard a pin drop for the next forty minutes. Many of them asked if

they could finish at home. Needless to say, I was happy to oblige! . . .

I consider my two classroom goals to have been successfully implemented. I have included some of the students' writing, unedited, to illustrate some of what I think have been benefits to me in working with these students. The journaling has shown me concretely the wide range of abilities in my class. Some students are extremely capable of putting their thoughts down. I will challenge them further with some work from *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters. I can get communication from my little shy Hispanic and find all sorts of wonderful things that she is too shy to share in other ways. The reading has been a revelation to me. I am wondering how I ever went so long without it. It has been a positive experience for all of us, and it gives me such a lift to hear the sigh of satisfaction when I say "All right, let's read now . . . ."

I ordered Maxine Hong-Kingston's *China Man* and I was finally notified that B. Dalton could not obtain it. I was disappointed. I heard Ms. Kingston on *Morning Edition* discussing the 60's. I was fascinated with her voice—it is as breathy and soft as described in *The Woman Warrior*. This is still another interest I developed while attending Growing Up American. I am waiting for her new book to come out in paperback!

Since I was in Duluth, I also purchased and read *Backbone* and *Letters from the Country* by Carol Bly. It was fun to feel her personality again through her essays. I bought our pastor, Father Spain, a copy of them. I wanted him to read her view on the failure of the churches in meeting people's needs. The short stories were quite real to me since I grew up in Duluth and attended the University of Minnesota-Duluth, largely a regional college at the time I was there.

With my Hemingway goal in mind, I purchased *Ernest Hemingway, the Short Stories* as soon as I returned from the institute. Our library did not have Leo's recommendation, *Understanding Fiction* by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. I waited two months for our local B. Dalton to obtain it, and unfortunately it was after school had started when it came. I have

not had time to do anything with it. I did some research at our library and have a quote by Evelyn Waugh from *Commonweal*, November 3, 1950, written in my journal. "Why do they all (the critics) hate him so?" Waugh answered, "I believe the truth is that they have detected in him something they find quite unforgiveable—Decent Feeling. Behind all the bluster and cursing and fisticuffs he has an elementary sense of chivalry—respect for women, pity for the weak, love of honor—which keeps breaking in. There is a form of high, supercilious caddishness which is all the rage nowadays in literary circles. That is what the critics seek in vain . . . and that is why their complaints are so loud and confident." This was in *A Library of Literary Criticism—Modern American Literature*. I found this a verification of what we had discussed in class. People got tired of the strong, silent hero. Maybe that is why Harlequin romances could get a stranglehold on the non-literary public. All of their heroes are in Hemingway's mold!

Along with my Hemingway project, also awaiting my attention is my birthday gift from my husband: the complete short stories of Flannery O'Connor. It is not as if I do not have anything to read!

—*Kathryn Lewis*

"IN A GENERAL SENSE, THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS coming to our intermediate school from their small, somewhat more homogeneously-populated, neighborhood kindergarten-fourth grade elementary schools has many elements of an initiation experience. There are many tests of wit, courage and endurance in the daily routines they are expected to accomplish—making it to the correct bus stop on time; learning locker combinations and being able to secure entry to lockers twice a day; remembering all materials, supplies, assignments, lunches to carry on A or B day; earning better grades for the first time in their school career.

Students' peer groups changed as now they have classmates from all over town with perhaps one or two students from the same elementary school in each class. The "old rules" do not work as our procedures and policies are geared to a larger-sized school. Even the parents' role and influence have changed with the expectation of greater student responsibility and independence. And so the parents, too, are going through an initiation (sometimes it feels more like an undesired weaning!) of "letting go" of their children, and need guidance . . . .

My low reading group seems more "humanized", too, by the incorporation of some of Carol Bly's suggestions for experiencing literature. We are definitely using the "reader" approach as we discuss the characters in terms of our own experiences and values. How quickly the students caught on to the genre of human interest while recognizing that some we read were accounts of real events and others were fictionalized accounts. They are determining which characters they can identify with as they learn to look at a character's behavior to determine their values.

—Roberta Hendrickson

"I HAVE ALWAYS LIKED TO READ A WIDE VARIETY OF material—but until last summer, I read to find out the characters, setting, plot, and followed the action, and I never looked deeper than that. It was the way that we were taught and we have passed it on to the students that we have taught over the years. Finally, we now can explore a writing with an open mind to delve to the bottom of the author's thoughts, and sometimes reading new things into the writing, because of the experiences that we have had in our lives . . .

The students are beginning to relate to the stories and enjoy the humor that they find in the writing, the finding of solutions to problems in the story. They are reading extra outside

readings and reporting on the books—whether they like the story and the reasons for the insights into the problems.

At least they are beginning to think—something they just did not want to do at first. Everything should have a one word answer or you can find a sentence to answer the questions. Phrases like—what do you think? What do you feel? How does this apply to you? Have you ever been in a situation like this? Many are speaking of cares, interests, problems they are having or seeing around them in the seventh grade with its many changes, and the years ahead of them. At times it seems that they are in need of talking to air these concerns where they are not laughed at, as they are familiar to all of the students . . . .

My thoughts are that even the book companies that we so religiously follow have not given us an inkling of what to look for when we read. Some of the newer editions are now beginning to have the world 'think' in their questions. We are hidebound by the old method and regardless how they tell us that we are going to learn something from their new series—it is the same old thing with only new pictures or different cultures, or a few good 'ole' classics introduced in the new editions.

—*Lorraine Braun*

"AN OLD CHINESE PROVERB TELLS US:

I hear, and I forget
I see, and I remember
I do, and I understand

Students selected a character or symbol that was important to them in the book, and with construction paper, yarn, and other materials replicated what the character or symbol looked liked in their imagination. Brief summaries and the student's opinion of the book were attached to the figures. These were

first displayed in the classroom and then later in the school library.

Taped book reports modeled after radio talk shows were greeted with great enthusiasm and they provided students with opportunities to work and plan together. First, two or three students selected a book they wanted to read. After they read the book they wrote a radio program together. Book discussions and call-in shows were interrupted by music, station identification letters, and commercials. "Make it or break it," greeted callers to one call-in show. The book discussions displayed insightful and creative responses to the literature. Best of all, the students really enjoyed sharing their books and responding to the literature in this way.

—*Julie Dermody, SSSF*

"I HAVE TRIED TO INCORPORATE MORE INITIATION LITERAture into my lesson plans. A few of the titles I have found stimulating for discussion are *Sounder, Stone Fix, The 10th Good Thing About Barney,* and *Perfect the Pig.* The students enjoyed these books. However, after reviewing my lesson plans for this paper, I realized that I use more nonfiction than fiction with my students.

Finally, I find that since my experience at the institute, I am keenly interested in my students' attitudes toward fiction literature. I have held numerous discussions on the importance of fiction and the value of fiction versus nonfiction. Invariably, the students' reactions at all grade levels was that nonfiction was more valuable for understanding life. They could not understand or see any importance for reading something that is not true. Students respond to my questioning about fiction with answers such as these: "It's make believe" or "fiction lies." These answers are confusing considering the fact that when asked what their favorite book was three-fourths responded with a work of fiction.

After such discussions, it appeared to me that my students cannot empathize or identify with fictional characters. If the character is not real, reading about the character has no value other than possible entertainment. I wonder if this attitude is a result of the developmental stage of my students or a reaction to being questioned about what is real and what is not in the stories they have read. Have we, as teachers, encouraged the idea that if it is not real it is less important? Maybe we have conditioned our students to be uncomfortable with the ambiguity of fiction.

It disappointed me to know that my students held this view. Because of this, I have held discussions on the attributes of fiction. We discussed the possibility of fiction having meaning to our lives, fiction stimulating our imaginations, fiction helping us to understand others' feelings and fiction making us think about new ideas. After these discussions, my students did begin to identify with how we can relate to feelings of the fictional character and that we can learn things about adapting to life from fiction.

—*Rose Prunty*

"THE INSTITUTE HAS HAD AN IMPACT ON THE STORIES I read to my students. I now discuss the stories with my students along the same lines that we did this last summer. In the past, I never introduced the term of narrator. My students now know what I am talking about when I refer to the narrator. When I ask what happened in the story I now ask if the words in the story said what the students assumed they said. Did the text say that or is it something that the student believes because of their interpretation of the text? In short, we are working on the difference between reader response and what the text actually says . . .

After reading a section of the book, I usually ask questions about how the characters felt, and why they felt that way?

Why they thought the character felt that way, and did the text suggest that was the way they felt or was it just the reader's interpretation (reader response)?

One interesting thing happened at the end of the story that is worthy of note. The character was expecting his family to arrive with a new baby that was born since he and his father had left home to start a new life in the wilderness. At the end of the book when the father returns with the boy's mother and sister, the boy finds out that this new baby died shortly after birth. I noticed one boy in my classroom snap his head up and look at me with a wide-eyed expression. When I finished reading the book a few minutes later his hand was up immediately. He asked if he could borrow the book from me to read on his own.

I agreed. I was fully aware that his mother had a full-term stillborn child a little over a year ago. I was also aware that he was still getting counseling to deal with it. After he read the book on his own and returned it to me, I asked him why he wanted to read it on his own after I had just read it to the class. He told me that he had never read about anyone around his own age who had to deal with the kind of experience that happened to his family. He told me that he felt like he was the only kid that ever had that happen in one's family. The book he said, "was like real life," at least that part of that book was for him. I hope it did help him in some way.

—Peter Hulke

"WITH THE STUDENTS PREPARED, WE WERE READY TO begin reading. Instead of using the basal recommended approach, I just let them read the story from start to finish in a part of the room they chose. My students really enjoyed the idea of getting out of their seats and finding their own special place in the room to enjoy the story. When they had finished reading, they could return to their seats and draw a picture of their favorite part of the story or start thinking how they might

answer the questions on the large wheel for class discussion. The following questions were on the large wheel:

a. Why do you think the author wrote this story?

b. Who are the characters in this story and what is it about that character I like or do not like?

c. Was there an initiation in this story? Who went through it and what was it?

d. Do you think this story will be read by students in the future?

e. What happened in the story that reminded me of something in my life?

f. Would you recommend this story to your best friend to read? Why?

The students could decide which questions they wanted to discuss first by pointing with the arrow. By having ownership to decide which questions they could discuss they were much more interested in it. The most important part of this was to make sure each student realizes that their idea or thoughts about the story were worth something and we can learn from all our ideas . . . .

Using this approach to reading with my reading classroom has been very positive for both my students and myself. We are realizing that reading is more than skills and reading out loud. Reading can be fun and interesting. We can relate our life and experiences we have had with the characters in the story. Our ideas about a story are important and so are the thoughts of others.

—*Sandra Barrett*

"THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF MY READING PROGRAM includes one story a week with four to six comprehension questions and ten to fifteen vocabulary words from the story. Every two weeks my students are assigned a novel from my collection and this is discussed several times before the final open-book essay test. Each Wednesday we have "Writers' Workshop" during which time everyone writes, including their teacher. Our last project was to write Halloween stories for primary children, make an attractive book with pictures, practice with each other, and then read this story to a kindergarten, first, or second grade class.

The multiple benefits from projects like this are hard to measure. Our primary teachers report there is always a resurgence of writing interest among their students after they experience the modeling of our sixth graders. That alone would be worth it. Of most importance is to give students a purpose for writing and rewriting and writing some more.

The *notebook log* has proven to be an excellent source of communication for my students and me. It is a means for my students to record comprehension answers, to compare and contrast previous stories, and for me to make comments, suggestions, and to praise and encourage good thinking. Although I arbitrarily award points for each answer, my point system emphasis is not on "right answers" as much as it is on thorough thinking and supporting opinions with good rationale. I feel it is vital to help our students to become good "thinkers," and writing is an excellent tool through which to do this. They learn to take risks, to gain confidence, and to seek alternative perspectives.

—*Marcia DeGroote*

"I ASKED, HOW MANY OF THE STUDENTS FOUND THE book enjoyable and everyone raised their hands. This usually does not happen; there are always some children that do not particularly care for a book that is being read. This struck me

as important because I had not only read it to them, but expected the children to write evaluations and reactions to initiation themes in the story and the students still like it.

Whatever the reason for the success of the two books using the initiation theme, I definitely will continue to work with other stories and books having the same theme at other times throughout the rest of the year. One thing I can say for sure, is that the students certainly seem to get involved in stories with this theme as we adults did, and that is very exciting. If this approach encourages even one student to read one extra book it will be marvelous.

—Dorothy Roder

"WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT OUR "FINAL" WAS A PRE-POST write and group/class discussion of Gail Godwin's "Over the Mountain," I was terrified. When the time came, I decided it was time to test my skill as using the "New Criticism" approach.

Using Leo's model, I systematically went through all of the "New Criticism" elements discussed in class: narrator, style, tone, irony, and initiation.

Surprised at how quickly it allowed me to get inside the text, I was sorry I had not tried doing a pre-write sooner. And although I questioned some of my conclusions, I realized I had already doubled my understanding of the text.

When I took my pre-write to my group for discussion, I found that although others may have written more, my practice of taking one element and asking for comments was appreciated and helped lead the group through a systematic discussion of the text. Not only did the entire group come to a consensus, most of us agreed that it was the best group session we had experienced at the institute.

—Jill LaBatte

"I AM A CAUTIOUS PERSON. I ALWAYS PLAY IT SAFE. I USED to read scientific, philosophic, religious and historic books, everything that gave me fact-proven information. My time was, still is, limited. Being a wife, mother, and professional person, I basically concentrated my reading time to material written to expose "real" factual truths. Strange how I managed to fool myself for so many years. I now see that as a result of this limited exposure to a variety of written material I became somewhat stagnated.

What a wonderful thing happened to me during the reading institute. It was as if a whole new world opened up to me. Fiction has become a passion. I now read stories based on inner universal realities of life. How many times I am given the great opportunity to live vicariously through a multitude of initiation processes! I can experience the pain, shed the tears, escape in my inner shell, and yet retain my self-worth. I am allowed to study options in the privacy of my own heart and, yes, I can build up a store house full of initiation experiences. This is becoming a source of security and strength which I had never experienced to this degree in my whole life.

—*Johanna Martin*

"I USED TO HAVE A NEIGHBOR WHO RAN AROUND THE community trying to scare people about "humanism." I don't have any of the tracts she handed out, but according to what I can remember, humanism, perpetrated mainly by the schools, was a selfish field of thought which would surely corrupt our children. According to the tracts, humanists were concerned mainly with enjoying life, satisfying their desires, and catering to their bodies' every whim and desire. Being a teacher, I didn't agree with this and I never knew a humanist.

Simply put, the humanities are the study of humankind. This covers a broad field of studies. The literature, the histories and philosophies of man from the beginnings of his writ-

ten records to the present time are important tools in the understanding of how we got to be the way we are today. It also gives us insights on ways of behavior which are beneficial to mankind.

Through the study of great literature, children can learn about honesty, integrity, faithfulness, truthfulness, and perseverance. They can learn from examples in literature how to meet adversity with grace and dignity. Kindness and compassion are learned through great literature.

—*Barbara Nemec*

"WHEN I ATTEMPT TO LIST THE WAYS I HAVE GROWN through the Growing Up American Institute, several things immediately come to mind. Spending three weeks with college literature professors and a philosopher, in a relaxed yet inspiring setting, provided mind stretching experiences for me. I have had existential moments in the past and had several more during these three weeks: times when I felt how important my being was to the world and how insignificant and, ultimately, how forgotten I would become when I die. These things give me a basic humanity so I can give of myself to my colleagues and students. Sometimes I get so busy and stressed, I forget to stop and just think. This institute gave me the opportunity to muse and think and share. Another gain came from sharing experiences, both teaching and living, with other teachers and Midwesterners. The discussions, rap sessions, parties and co-existing in a dormitory provided a closeness not attainable in daily commuter classes. Consulting with our own personal reading specialist was enlightening and very helpful. She also provided a necessary bridge between elementary and college teaching and thinking. The authors, poet, librarian and Native American author provided a richness and variety to the institute. I use and share the wealth of information they shared with me. I have purchased several books they

recommended and understand their craft and heritage more fully now. I have also become a crusader for grant seeking. I have put together some references and sources for writing for grants which I will be presenting to my colleagues during a staff meeting soon.

I feel my students are benefiting from the discussions we have in reading. I think they are increasing their self-concept by the positive regard they feel when they share their ideas with classmates during our literature discussions. This year I have 23 students, half are excellent readers and half are poor to low-middle readers. The best thing I discovered about this exercise was the way all 23 were able to participate equally. I do have the students grouped and spend more time on basics with the low students. But I do not really want the low students stigmatized. This exercise helped them feel they were on the same level with the better readers and just as able to form and give opinions.

—*Joanne Goodrich*

"IN CONCLUSION, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT ALTHOUGH I have always read a lot to my students, since attending Growing Up American, I have broadened my view of using literature in the classroom. I am more convinced that literature often can replace stuffy text books and uninteresting worksheets and do a better job of teaching the material to be learned. I have also become more aware of trying to develop in my students a true openness to the ideas of others, a respect for everyone's right to their own opinion even if that opinion is the opposite of ours. Perhaps I can even help them to learn to rejoice in their differences helping them to see that these differences can provide a richness of ideas beyond what only one or two people could create. They need to be taught that "different" does not automatically mean "wrong." I have learned to sit back and give my students more time to express ideas generated by the

stories read. I refrain more often from giving my point of view. Hopefully, my students will "catch" something from me that will enable them as the years go by to think deeply about what they read without prodding from someone else and find a message for themselves at times when they are in need of one. This will help them through many kinds of "initiation."

—*Donna Swenson*

"WHY DO YOU THINK THE AUTHOR WROTE A STORY ABOUT a girl from Asia who learned to skate? How did Tiffany's determination to be a champion figure skater change her life? How would you change the ending of the story? What would you have done if you were in Tiffany's place? Go to your stations with your partner and pretend you are Tiffany and a friend. Write a different ending to the story. Think of a way you would have solved her problem if you had written the story. If you were a champion like Tiffany, how would you have made friends?

Growing Up American has removed the shackles from my reading class. We make up our own questions. Sometimes the children have questions for each other. We have just scratched the surface. It is exciting to think where our reading, writing, expressing, thinking, and reacting will be by the end of the year. Using the discussion techniques and initiation from our workshop is not a big deal to the children. They feel very natural and comfortable. It is like we have always done it. Their reading, writing, and expression have improved already. The basal reader would like for you to laboriously question the students at the end of each page over literal details. We now read the whole story without stopping. They love it. The students are at ease identifying and discussing the problem in the story. They like to determine if the problem was worked through and the characters were better, stronger, happier, the same, or worse.

—*Marjorie Harr*

"OUR READING PROGRAM IS SUCH THAT IT DOES NOT allow much time to analyze the stories the students read in the way I would like to. I have 29 fifth-graders in my reading class—broken up into three groups. I have only 60 minutes daily to accomplish all that has to be done. The administration insists that students pass the standardized tests that go along with each book—with an 80 percent—which is considered their goal of achieving mastery in reading . . . .

I have tried very hard to discuss names, values, traditions, past, etc., in the stories that are in the students' basal readers. This becomes almost impossible at times because of the types of stories that are in the children's textbooks. One has to constantly remember that when children's basals are put together, things such as minorities, fiction, nonfiction, etc., have to be a part of that book. As a result, to discuss into any depth what we were taught last summer is almost impossible.

—*Carole Perry*

"CHILDREN NEED TO BE TAUGHT TO THINK AND TO SEE what is beyond the printing on the page, similar to the way we were taught in this course, to put reading and thinking together. To me, this is the key to successful understanding of any undertaking. Many times teachers say, "Do you understand me?" and this is taken literally and passes right over the heads of pupils. There is not a true understanding of what is said and consequently what is read. The deeper comprehension of the printed word, perhaps because of the lack of ability to decipher in their minds what the words mean, is lost to many of our students. The thought process is definitely a variable between different individuals, because so many only know "entertainment" from the tube. Many of these same students cannot tell about programs they have watched as they do not know how to use their thought process sufficiently to repeat the story. What a dull world they may be facing if we, as

teachers, cannot help them make a change. Children who are not motivated in the lower grades to make these changes, will have a truly difficult time in the upper elementary or high school years. Many children say that they do not read because "it's boring" but perhaps the true reason is lack of thinking and understanding the material makes "boring" an easy way out for them.

—*Estelle Krzykowski*

"THE INSTITUTE'S THEME OF "INITIATION" IS SOMETHING that I might be able to try to focus on when I begin the "chapter book" reading. I plan to try to use the concept with the character analyses, and with trying to incorporate values teaching. The other theme of the "absent or weak" fathers would be readily identifiable to my students. I hope to use that with discussions of how the characters overcame their problems. Perhaps, they would not feel so different. With the current divorce rate, and single parenthood growing, this theme will not be fading . . . .

The Institute reinforced the importance of the whole language approach. The reading, the writing, and thinking skills can be so intertwined. It seems that I have been moving more and more in that direction in the last few years, but I believe that the discussions that we had formally, and informally with the presenters and the other participants really reaffirmed my belief in this approach. I briefly touched upon the concept of relying less and less on the basal series adopted by the district. I am increasingly dissatisfied with such a "canned" approach. I have seen the fun the students can have with the other approach. I felt fortunate to be able to converse with teachers from such a wide geographic area, with such diverse professional settings, and to find that most were feeling as I was—so dissatisfied with the basal readers. I also was able to

learn of the most recent research in the area of reading. That also helped me in evaluation of my own teaching of reading . . . .

In conclusion, I feel I did gain valuable literature knowledge that I am using professionally. Personally, I gained some insights into myself. I have tried various ways of how I could share the teaching/learning with my students. I could feel myself relax, and make the tasks more fun with some exaggerated humor. I strengthened my own mission of improving self-concepts, as a top priority. In fact, I really formulated my own professional "mission statement" this fall, and self-concept was primary. Doing that task for myself really helped me prioritize what I do in a given day. I am extremely pleased with the use now of writing journals for my students. I know that I am just beginning the new year. I still have much more to go to refine what I have started, and to expand into the new areas that I feel that I have not really touched yet. The teaching of values, or discussion of characters and their values, is where I now feel that I am at.

—*Paulette Ozzello*

"CHILDREN LEARN FROM LISTENING. I WOULD LIKE TO have every child read at least one-half hour a day. The selections could be books, stories, plays, poetry—any literature. The selection should be well-written, intrinsically valuable, mentally stimulating, emotionally moving and—at times—morally strengthening. I think this experience must take place in school—as it usually does not at home. I believe that children can understand and appreciate literature far above their reading ability level. This, then, is the time to read aloud—to develop an early interest in good reading—in excellent writing.

Children should also be reading good literature. In general, reading books have stories produced to teach certain word attack skills. The appeal of these stories is low—the discussion

value is nil. The plot is 1-2-3 done. The word attack skills are there and are usually well done. But the desire for GOOD reading is not built in. So—having taught the child to read through offering him trash—a simplified plot with no subtle nuances—should we be surprised if this child prefers comic books—"Humpty Dumpty" type magazines—and then graduates to Louis L'Amour, Danielle Steel and others of that type?

—Ruth Boldan

"I CAME AWAY THIS SUMMER WITH A GOAL OF GETTING MY students to turn from being passive readers to active readers. I wanted them not only to read the assigned stories and complete the comprehension questions and pass the test, but to go one step further. I wanted them to develop opinions, make judgments, analyze characters and plot, look for logical and illogical events. In general, to become truly involved.

These same questions from a child's level popped up when I informed my sixth grade class that they would be making journal entries. They were constantly asking what I wanted and had great difficulty accepting that I simply wanted their own thoughts. Then to really throw them over the edge I explained that there were not necessarily any right or wrong answers. Their feelings were that if they did not know what kind of answers I wanted how could they give them to me and how could they get a good grade. The students who are the most grade conscious worried the most.

Now my next step was to give the journal entries a greater sense of importance and not just a requirement to pass the course. After four weeks of waiting for every student to bring in a special notebook just for journal writing, I managed to get the English department to donate steno pads. The students now seemed to take a little more ownership and responsibility for their writing. My last goal was to get the students to concentrate on their writing longer than just long enough to slap

down a quick response and then move on to something else. I did this by using a timer. The first limit was five minutes. The students had to keep their steno pads open for the full time whether or not they were writing. For some it was an eternity and others barely got started. Eventually, I moved the time limit up to seven, then eventually ten minutes.

Observations I have made up to this point have been very encouraging. Although I started this with set goals, my expectations were quite low. My students are not great writers and many do not like to write at all. I, however, was pleasantly surprised. Once they realized that they were not being judged on their grammar skills, they took a greater interest in their journal entries. Putting aside the large class size, the mix of reading levels, the mixture of exceptional education students with the regular education students I began to feel success.

The first unit of stories were folk tales from around the world. Students were introduced to customs, traditions, and life styles quite different from their own. We traveled from Japan to Vietnam to imaginary lands. My students may only leave their neighborhoods to come to school and now new doors were opening. I went back to Leo's question, "What does it mean to be a person?" and expanded on it. I wanted students to see the characters' experiences as not unique but to look for common bonds. From class discussions I pulled out some background information, both their own and the characters, and looked at how we relate to the stories. Again, I found the students were constantly looking for a single correct answer. I emphasized that we all bring our own experiences to the stories. Many times as children our students do not have any controls over their previous experiences, but they all are valuable. Some of the journal entries deal with appreciating the elderly, making alternate choices for the characters, validating choices characters made and evaluating stories not only from the reader's personal reading preferences, but the author's purpose for writing the story.

—*Susan Balke*

"THE PUPILS THAT I HAVE WORKED WITH IN THE JUNIOR Great Books program are very hesitant about asking their own questions, or if they do, they are most often questions of fact. They do not like to elaborate on an answer, but would like to make it as brief as possible. Sometimes in offering an opinion, they find it difficult to back their opinfon with passages from the text. Discussions include the motives for the characters' statements or actions, unusual uses of language, apparent contradictions, key passages, and the major theme or idea. All of these discussion points take a good deal of time before the pupils are at ease in making their contributions and keeping on track. I have found that getting the pupils involved in such a discussion is a difficult task. Many questions go unanswered for such a long period of time that the discussion, for all purposes, grinds to a halt, and I answer just to be able to move on a little further.

—*Shirlie Moysis*

"IN CONCLUSION, I FEEL THAT LITERATURE CAN BE ONE of the healthiest open doors to the "human condition." It can also be a comfortable back door, if necessary, into a truly honest exchange of well-formed ideas and feelings. Shyness, elitism, or verbal ineptitude, I feel, too frequently preclude exploring ideas with each other. There seems to be a whole lot of loneliness and isolation at all levels in our society, and too many "absent fathers" for all our mutual initiations. Good literature can be a great deal of help in providing a springboard for people connecting. I know enlightenment, bonding, and feeling more comfortable happens through reading literature with my school children. I experienced that going on in the class Growing Up American. A reader may belong to a dysfunctional family, a foundering-fatherless society, be seeing a screwy psychologist, or have a poor teacher, but the very best that human society has to offer is right there for the

taking. Sharing this literature makes the connection human, healthy and usable in our own lives.

—*June Perry*

"WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN AND WHY ARE HUMAN experiences important? From Young Goodman Brown to Editha, from Huck Finn to the Woman Warrior, from Frankie to Joy (Hulga), I have come to believe a little more in the basic love for self (self-esteem) that underlies any value system. I have watched these characters in books and short stories meet crisis situations in life and, either deal with them according to their beliefs, or be destroyed by their inability to cope, or refuse to acknowledge that any initiation ever took place or had any effect on them. All of these situations, to some degree, had an effect on me. Sometimes, I became more sure of a belief I had, sometimes I did the needed reflection about a value that I just was not sure of, and, sometimes, I could see the fallacy of my belief and be ready to discard it. Much of what I perceived came from the literature itself; however, some came from interaction with my peers and the teachers, and the interaction among the teachers themselves.

—*Diane Schaum*

"*GOALS*

A. The student will feel secure in his/her response to a literary work and not be dependent on someone else's response.

B. The student will know why he/she responds the way he/she does to literary work.

C. The student will respect the response of others as being as valid for them as his/hers is for him/her.

D. The student will recognize that there are common elements in people's responses to the same piece of literature.

—*Rose Edington*

★ ★ ★

Cary Werner

Literature and Ethics in a 6th Grade Classroom

As was suggested to me by John and Leo, I reread my journal from the three weeks at St. Scholastica the night before school began. It helped to remind me how much I came to value myself as a reader of literature once I saw that others valued me as the same. I decided I would try to guide my students into feeling the same way.

Along with this decision, a quote from Carol Bly kept coming back to mind. She asked us to think about ethics. She said that literature was the one logical place from which we could begin to teach ethics to our children. In remembering my past years of teaching in Milwaukee, I knew I would find plenty of gaps in the ethical education of the students I would meet this year. Could literature really help to fill those gaps?

So the two questions foremost in my mind as I prepared for the first semester became:

1. Can I help even one student discover not just a love for reading good literature, but a love of himself as a reader?

and,

2. Is literature a solid enough base from which to present concrete lessons in ethics to a group of children who, for the most part, have been raised to "look out for number one?"

Of course, along with these questions come dozens of others: will they be able to read at all? If so, will the reading levels and interest levels be too diverse to find any common ground for comprehension and discussion? Will they be willing to discuss, to share their thoughts and feelings and parts of their past so we can all learn what it is they bring to each story? As for ethics, am I, a white woman from a middle-class background, any kind of guide or sounding board to help poor minority students examine their ethics? Time would tell; but first, the students.

I have a sixth grade homebase consisting of 38 students, ranging in age from 10 years to 14½ years. There are 21 boys and 17 girls. Ethnically, this is a very diverse group: there are 24 blacks, 8 whites, 2 hispanics, and 4 students with a mixed race background. I see these same students for English, science, and reading. During the course of the day, there are also three exceptional education students mainstreamed into the classroom, which brings the total number of students in the reading class up to 41. Of these original 41 students, I can expect to see 17 of them stay in my class until June; statistics show the others (60 percent) will have transferred to another school, another district or a correctional institution before the end of the year. Of course, new students are constantly coming in to replace those who have moved, so the people and the climate of the classroom are in constant flux.

A brief look at the cumulative folders showed that the vast majority of my students come from non-traditional homes. They are being raised by single parents, grandparents, step-parents, foster parents, siblings, or other relatives. Only 5 live with both biological parents. Although many of the

parents/guardians work outside the home, 90 percent of my students are eligible for free lunch, which means the income level of the family is at or below the poverty level.

Attendance (except for the excessive number of transfers) is excellent. My students rarely miss a day of school. All but 4 of my kids are bussed to school, some spending as long as 45 minutes one way on the bus.

This is just 1 class at John Audubon School for the Humanities, where there are 1,100 sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students. There are 73 staff members including 2 guidance counselors, 2 assistant principals, and 1 principal. The school is also served by a social worker, a psychologist, and a county nurse, each of whom spends about 2½ days per week at Audubon.

The school is on the south side of Milwaukee in a completely white neighborhood. As the majority of these students are from the north side, a largely unintegrated black area, they are not just crossing a city. They are crossing from one world into another and back again every school day.

This has been an unprecedentedly violent year in Milwaukee, with the homicide rate over 100 and climbing. Domestic violence, criminal neglect, and burglaries, according to *The Milwaukee Journal*, are crimes which have increased 48 percent from just last year. This radical increase in crimes has taken place largely in the black neighborhoods, claiming black victims, and is blamed almost entirely on crack. Crack (cocaine) mars the life of virtually every child I teach. He either "mules" it, or does not, but wants to; abuses it, or would if given the chance; is "cared for" by someone who abuses it or sells it; knows someone who has gotten rich from it; knows someone who has gotten dead from it.

Can literature possibly make a difference?

To keep from being overwhelmed before even beginning, I knew I had to close in the circle around these kids. We pulled away from the wide, bloody, summer city streets, pulled in and away even from the bigness of the middle school, and drew the circle around one sixth-grade classroom at the end of the hall.

Here is what we could address, handle, understand, control. Here is where we would read.

During the first reading class, while the kids were still intimidated by the enormity of middle school and were unfamiliar with each other (e.g. *quiet*), I read to them.

I read the first 2 chapters of Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet*. It is an action-packed book about a fifteen-year old boy whose parents recently divorced. He finds himself alone in the Canadian wilderness with nothing but a hatchet and his wits. The students listened. Actively listened. They groaned when the dismissal bell rang, but I was ready to dance a jig. They were hooked, and I could not wait to reel them in.

I read again on the next day; I did not even consider passing out the readers. Again, total interest in the story. On the third day, about halfway through the period, I stopped reading to discuss what had happened in the story so far. We talked about the main character's feelings about divorce, about relying on himself, speculated about what might happen to him. When I asked if they would like to finish the book, the answer was a unanimous, "Yes!" When I told them I could get a copy of the book for each of them so they could finish it on their own, all that interest vanished instantly. In fact, that moment has become my new definition of a split-second! The door not only slammed in my face, but the bolt flew across and 2 chains snapped into place. They made it perfectly clear that, while they were willing to put up with my reading to them, they were certainly not about to actually read.

This was understandable. A placement test showed the reading levels of this class range from 2:1 (early second-grade level) to 7:6 (late seventh-grade). Without asking, I was pretty sure that reading library books in the past was a chore whose only reward had been to write a two-page report when the book had finally been completed. I could not blame them for not relishing the thought of reading. So, I made a deal. I promised I would read to them every day during our homebase period, twenty minutes after lunch. Their end of the deal was to come

on time to reading class eighth hour and to participate in a positive way.

That is the way it has worked since the first week of school. We finished *Hatchet* as well as *The Bridge to Terabithia* and a Judy Blume novel. Because November is National Reading Month, the kids have agreed to silent reading of the books of their choice during homebase in November. I will not ask for book reports, but each child will keep track of how many minutes he reads each day. These will be added together, and a bulletin board in the room will be changed each day to show the total number of minutes of reading which are occurring throughout the month. The kids are excited about this, and I was ecstatic when someone asked me to recommend a book.

I realize that some kids are reading simply because it is required, or because it is part of a deal. But I also feel I can now answer my first question, "Can students discover a love of reading?" with a definite *yes*. I think many of them are reading because they have rediscovered that it is fun and interesting, and will continue to read independently.

That still leaves the question about ethics and literature. While it is fairly easy to gauge that reading interest among my students has risen during these first weeks of school, it is far more difficult to judge whether or not ethical questions posed in the literature have had any kind of effect.

The first unit in the reader used by all Milwaukee Public Schools' sixth-graders (McDougal-Little's *Reading Literature*) is called "Timeless Tales." It contains legends, folk tales, and myths in the form of fiction, drama, and poetry. These stories are not basal dribble, manufactured for a reading series; they are truly literary works from such authors as Isaac B. Singer, John Steinbeck, Pearl S. Buck, and Isaac Asimov. We certainly did read stories that posed many ethical questions: should a son keep from betraying his mother even if it meant certain death for him? Should a man value his poor brother more than the company of rich friends? Should a giant be allowed to tyrannize a town simply because he is big and powerful? Should people be disposed of because they are old? Should a

storekeeper be able to charge whatever prices he chooses simply because his is the only store in town?

Many questions, giving rise to much discussion. Unfortunately, it did not take me long to realize that, while literature might act as a forum for discussing ethical questions, the discussions have little or no carry-over into the real world of these students, a world about which I understand precious little. This was made clear to me on one of the first days of school when a student discovered his new pencil case, which he had left on his own desk, had been stolen. All the kids were mad. I was glad they were mad—until I realized none of them were angry at whoever took the pencil case; they were angry at the student who left it where it was possible to steal it. Ahem. I was beginning to see a rift in viewpoints here.

The gap widened as the days went on. One of the stories, "The Wise Old Woman," was about a man who protected his mother from an evil ruler at great personal risk. When I asked the students if any of them might do the same, a shocking number of them said, no. No way. This ate away at me until I spoke with one of the counselors who said it is not unusual for mom to sell the refrigerator for drug money. As upsetting as that was, it certainly helped me see two different things. It helped me understand why a kid might not be willing to throw away everything for dear old mom. It also proved again that these kids come from a world of which I understand very little.

A story in *Real Magazine* gave way to an interesting discussion about stealing, about who it hurts. But what do I say to a girl whom I find stealing toilet paper from the school bathroom? Chances are she is following her mom's directions. She is stealing, yes, but not for any personal gain. Stealing, but not, as far as she can see, hurting anyone. Am I to remind her of the story, tell her it is ethically wrong to be doing this? I mean, it's toilet paper.

Ethics . . . the lines are fuzzy and getting fuzzier every day for me, when my goal was to help define them for my students. In response to the question of whether or not literature was a base from which to present lessons in ethics, I feel I can

answer, yes. However, I have learned that presenting them does not mean imposing them on the lives of my students, lives of which I know little. I can present ethical solutions, but cannot begin to hope they will be incorporated into the lives of these kids.

I believe, though, that those few kids who allow books to be part of their lives will always have a place to which they can escape.

★ ★ ★

Robert McKeown

Confronting Our Beliefs: Literature and Human Experience

I came to the College of St. Scholastica doubtful of my abilities as a reader of serious fiction. I had applied for the National Endowment for the Humanities Institute in American Literature knowing that the experience ahead of me would be a risk to my intellectual and moral values. The institute, Growing Up American, was to study literature with a focus on the theme of initiation in the variety of American experiences. I had never, and still do not, consider myself an avid reader. I enjoy reading at a slow pace, taking small bits of literature at a time so as not to give myself mental indigestion. I only dared apply for the institute because I knew the other applicants were not literary experts, but elementary teachers. And I knew that I had enjoyed that literature the most which had stimulated my thinking and challenged my moral development. I was anxious and excited with the expectation that this course was not going to be another class in educational

methods. When I read that we would be making our own application of what we were to learn, I was quite enthused by the thought that the grant's writers had such faith in us.

In my mind, I grouped this course with only a handful of classes I had taken in my post-secondary educational program. These classes were all in the humanities. One was a general philosophy class I took as an undergraduate, in which I received my lowest letter grade since junior high school. The other was a philosophy of education course which I had taken as part of my Master of Arts program.

This category of courses I have set up in my mind are those which caused me to confront the very beliefs which guide my behavior. Growing Up American helped me continue a process of discovering and developing a personal philosophy with which I make sense of the world around me. The purpose of this paper is to show the reader how this course has influenced my attitudes toward literature, towards interpersonal relationships, and towards educating young children.

My early experiences with philosophy served to show me that much of what I have believed was either philosophically indefensible, or at least indefensible by my own understanding. Many of my religious convictions and other beliefs were painfully challenged by my newly acquired understanding of logic. I was not certain whether I should expand my understanding of philosophy, abandon all of my beliefs, or find other means of evaluating those beliefs. And though I continued to read good works of literature and study some history, I was leary of venturing much further into the area of philosophy for quite some time.

While my general philosophy course took an approach whereby current issues were examined by various methods of logic, my educational philosophy course involved examination of differing philosophical schools of thought. Our responses to an inventory of philosophical assumptions profiled our personal philosophies along the lines of idealism, realism, and pragmatism or existentialism. And while I found myself most strongly identifying with the idealists, I gained a wholesome

respect for those who construct beliefs from other philosophical viewpoints. I discovered that all kinds of beliefs and behaviors could be justified and evaluated critically through the use of philosophy because of varying assumptions about what is real, what is true, and what is of value.

It was this background in the humanities that I brought to the readings and discussions at the Institute. From my first reading of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," I knew that my values were again to undergo the scrutiny I inevitably put them through when I confront a meaningful piece of literature. I entered a period of cognitive dissonance from the onset, wondering whether my values and beliefs would be strengthened or demoralized in the process. I felt that, through the literature and discussions, I was going to experience a process of initiation not unlike Goodman Brown. That character discovered that those he most dearly loved and admired in the world had their dark and evil side. I wondered whether I, too, was not about to learn that the world around me was not what I had thought it to be. And I wondered whether my own values, as Goodman Brown's, would prove insufficient in dealing with what I was to find in this literature.

As an idealist, I came to the works expecting some truth and some value that I could apply in living my life in the material world. I was cautioned by one of the instructors that many writers would be distressed by the thought of a reader bringing those sorts of expectations to their texts. This idea, penned in the margin of my journal, began a train of thought that led me to believe that the reader has as much (if not more) of a role in the making of literature as does the writer. I also began to understand that the writers, by virtue of their craft, had beguiled me into believing that their values, or those of their protagonists, were somehow more noble or true than those I had espoused.

One of the greatest risks to my esteem as a reader came when, during a small group discussion, I confided that I often come to a piece of literature with a bit of fear and trepidation. The group listened intently as I told them that one of the

reasons that I read is that I find that literature often challenges my values. To my surprise, the group did not find this attitude to be as archaic and foolish as I thought they might. Some even found it to be rather noble. A classmate who works in a Catholic grade school related that she teaches her students that values and beliefs are often strengthened when confronted, but had not specifically considered literature a tool for that purpose. My self-esteem as a reader grew significantly from that day, as I considered that the quality of what one reads, and how one reads, may really be more important in the development of one's psyche than the quantity of what one reads. My personal philosophy took a significant step toward the existential school of philosophical thought.

The experience I have just mentioned taught me another important concept, one that I am currently experimenting with in my classroom. I began to see that discussion of literature can stimulate one's growth as a reader in a fuller way than can reading and thinking alone. The discussions stimulated my thinking and made me attempt to look at the stories from different view points. I latched on to other people's interpretations of the literature and was able to expand upon their ideas. My second grade "story time" takes more time when I give students open ended questions to discuss, but I believe that the time is spent much more efficiently.

During the second week of the Institute, I began to question more of the assumptions I had about literature. I had assumed that literature, along with the other humanities, somehow made us better people. On my weekend home, however, I was asked by some friends why we were reading adult literature if we were teachers of young children. I had to admit that literature had not made me a better person, but had only enabled me to become more aware of the variety of human experiences, and caused me to examine my attitudes towards them. As I contemplated what the purposes of literature might be, I needed to reject my former assertion that the literature itself teaches us what to value.

As a moralist, I reacted to the writings of Hemingway and the other realists with frustration. "Don't believe there is any good in the world," they seemed to be telling me. And I could not believe that these stories were written only to imitate life as it really is. I concluded that the purpose of much of the literature was to "put us in our place." Rather than pointing its readers to "what we should believe," this writing was telling us "what not to believe." To my favorite piece of all of them that we read, "Good Country People," by Flannery O'Connor, I gave the moral—"Don't believe in nothing." My beliefs concerning the value of literature can play an important role in checking and evaluating the values and ideas we hold.

Carol Bly brought us a very practical suggestion during one class discussion which, along with my new-found revelation about my value as a reader, enabled me to deal effectively with the literature on an emotional level. Ms. Bly took a very psychological approach to reading, often quoting material on moral development by Lawrence Kohlberg. She suggested that before we read a piece of literature, we jot down four things we would like to see changed, and two things we would like to see preserved in the world. In doing so, we were to take a quick inventory of our basic values. She hoped that we might more easily interpret the actions and the values of the characters and narrators we encounter in the literature by comparing and contrasting them with our own values in a non-judgemental way.

I found this technique the most practical application I have been able to make from the Institute. As a reader, I have always found the characters to be the most interesting elements of stories. I knew I was one of the guilty parties that our instructor had said was treating these characters as though they were real people. By using this technique, I am able to more objectively evaluate the characters in light of how I would hope to react in similar situations. Keeping in mind that writers manipulate circumstances in order to reveal a character's human qualities, I can engage in reading for the purpose of developing myself morally. As an idealist, I have often at-

tempted to do just that, without the benefit of having such a method of grounding my values. Effectively, much of what I thought might be good for me to read was too difficult to deal with psychologically and emotionally. And, although this method is limited by its focus on only a few elements of literature, I believe that it may be simple enough to use with the beginning readers I teach.

This Institute, however, changed me in far greater ways as a teacher than by giving me one useful technique. It broadened my vision of how literature might be used to try one's own values, thereby gaining an understanding of other people. And, as I deal daily with students and parents who are religiously and culturally different from myself, I find this of fundamental importance. The reading list given by our instructors included works by authors who hold values, attitudes, and ideas with which I do not agree. Some had abandoned some of the values which I hold most dear. I may have learned the most about dealing with other people by struggling with those authors' ideas.

I discovered that I could humanly relate more effectively with authors and characters from other cultures, than with those who seemed to be rejecting the traditions of my own culture, the traditions I uphold in my own classroom. I found that I receive much less support and more needed criticism from the literature than I do from the majority of the clientele I serve. J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, for example, portrayed at least one individual who was not well served by an American educational institution and the expectations it upheld for students. Through literature, I concluded, we often are confronted by divergent thinkers who might otherwise be suppressed by society's majority opinion. And, although this may be one reason for the current decline in the popularity of serious fiction, I believe it is these thinkers who may teach our society the most. By this statement I am not saying that those writers who challenge the status quo (as most writers of initiation literature seem to do) have a healthier concept of what society ought to be. I do believe, however, that within this

diversity of thought, we encounter at least a few suggestions which readers may apply in order to better their society.

By way of example, I cite a common element found in most of the stories we read: a lack of any truly respectable father figure. By this, some readers may conclude that traditions are always detrimental to the growth of an individual in society. I conclude (along with countless others I am sure) that in order for traditions to be helpful to individual members of society, they must be the sorts of traditions that value diversity in its individuals. The Institute has brought me to a place where I am now more appreciative for those areas of my Christian tradition which account for individual differences. I now read the advice from Proverbs to "Train up a child in the way he should go . . ." with more emphasis on the word "he" than the word "should."

I did not learn this appreciation from stories where characters learned to deal with and appreciate their own traditions, but from stories like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *Invisible Man* in which characters went through a great deal of pain before feeling the necessity to abandon the traditions that they no longer could trust. As I read these pieces, I could not help wondering how these same characters might have reacted to some of the moral problems they faced, had they been given a Christian tradition that valued people of all sorts more than a set of unattainable ideals.

As I read these pieces, I did so from the points of view of a teacher of young, impressionable children, and of an expectant first-time father. While some readers in my class were identifying more with the characters who were reacting to the societal establishment, I identified more with the society itself. This may have made the reading more difficult for me, but I believe that I have gained more insight from this perspective.

Regardless of one's perspective, though, I believe all of us at the Institute were affected by the literature in a universal way. The literature and the discussions engaged our thoughts and emotions in the same way we hope our own students will be engaged in what they read and discuss. The Institute served as

a model, not only for how we might teach literature, but for how learning through literature might feel. After a few weeks in my classroom, I became aware that the second graders I was teaching had been too seldom involved with literature in the way I was this summer. They knew that learning the skills and the strategies of reading was important, but did not fully understand why.

Since the Institute, I have become actively involved in teaching literature as a tool for self-improvement. It is my hope that the students I teach will begin to use literature to make themselves aware of a variety of human experiences, and apply that awareness in caring for themselves and other individuals.

★ ★ ★

Jeanne Webb

Teaching Elementary School Children: Some Personal Values

Growing Up American, a three-week institute for elementary teachers, held in Duluth, Minnesota, had a profound effect on my life in many ways. It changed my ideas about some things, reinforced and validated my ideas about many things, and opened up my life to a whole new way of reading and appreciating literature. I have always loved to read. That is why this institute seemed like such a dream to me. I could not believe that I was actually going to have the opportunity to read for three weeks, share the experience with instructors and thirty-nine others that loved to read as much as I do, and receive many other benefits as well. It was an experience I will never forget, and in this paper, I would like to relate to you how the institute has affected me, and consequently the way I teach.

During the course of the institute this summer, I did not know if I would be teaching this fall. I had just renewed my

teaching certificate in the summer of 1988 after spending twelve years at home with my family. In the fall of 1988, just two short days before school started, I was hired to teach third grade in a private school. The reason for the late hiring was due to the fact that several new children had enrolled in third grade over the summer, thereby creating the need for a third classroom. Unfortunately, during the course of the school year, several children moved away, so my position was eliminated at the end of that year. Consequently, I spent my entire summer not knowing whether or not I would have a job. In mid-August I was contacted by the principal of the school asking me to accept a half-time position teaching sixth grade. I was apprehensive about it until she informed me that I would be responsible for the Language Arts block, and also Religion. So, I am presently employed by the Roncolli Catholic School system. This is a private school consisting of grades 1-12 in three separate locations. Preschool and K-2, Roncolli Elementary, is located in one building; grades 3-6, Roncolli Middle, is located in another building, and Roncolli Junior and Senior High are located in a third building. The school is in Aberdeen, South Dakota, a town (city) of about 35,000. Our school is quite small compared to the public schools in our town. In the middle school, where I teach, we have about 225 children, as compared to approximately 2,000 children in that age group in our public schools.

I came to Duluth in June with high hopes, excitement and anticipation. Not only was I excited about the institute, but by the prospect of having three weeks of time for *me* with no one else to worry about, no dishes or cleaning to do, and no errands to run. It was going to be a brand new experience for me in more ways than one. What an understatement! When I left the institute just three weeks later, I knew my life had been changed, in varying degrees, in many ways.

I grew intellectually because of Growing Up American, and learned many new skills. I had always been afraid to read certain types of literature because I did not think I would be able to interpret them *accurately* by myself. Consequently, I enjoyed

learning about the role of the narrator, discussing realism and romanticism, and I was especially intrigued to discover that I cannot always believe what the author is telling me. Until now, I was always naive enough to believe that what was being said was the truth—but no more! The biggest change for me, however, was in helping to clarify, reinforce or occasionally change some of my values, especially as they apply to my work with elementary school children. These values include:

1. Value of each individual's ideas and opinions. It was good to find out that I can read a piece of literature without worrying about whether or not I have understood it or get the 'right' meaning from the author. I now know that whatever I read will have meaning for me on some level—even if I do not agree with how someone else feels. It was reassuring to find that my viewpoints were listened to and respected by the rest of the class. It was delightful to observe the different personalities of the instructors. All of you share a love of literature, but it was manifested in such different ways. Letting us see that instructors have different opinions seemed an excellent way to let us know that our ideas and opinions were valid as well.

2. Value of active listening—I loved getting all the different viewpoints and ideas from the rest of the class—and the instructors. It was fascinating to me some of the ideas people come up with. Some I agreed with to an extent, and in some cases I found it hard to believe they had actually read the same thing I had! But whether or not I agreed, it was wonderful just to be a part of the collective brain power.

3. Value of acceptance and tolerance—there were some things that were talked about where I strongly disagreed with what others were saying or feeling. However, I realized that I cannot change people to be what I want them

to be, but must accept—or at least—tolerate them as they are.

4. Value of a nonthreatening, nonintimidating, learning environment. It was a joy and a privilege to be a part of the relaxed, informal atmosphere that all of you created in our classroom in Duluth. It allowed me to open up and feel free to voice my opinions and thoughts, because I knew that even though they might not be agreed with, they would be respected.

5. Value of sharing and caring. The comfortable relaxed atmosphere created in the classroom carried over into all aspects of my stay in Duluth. Everyone everywhere was so helpful and kind and understanding and friendly! Seldom have I felt so cared for as I did during my three weeks at your beautiful college. What a happy, warm memory that provides.

6. Value of a support system. From the time I was first selected to attend Growing Up American, until my return home at the end of June, the value of a support system was evident to me. Without it, I may not have had the courage to pick up and leave home for three weeks. However, everyone encouraged me to do it, especially my husband, children and close friends. And, once I arrived in Duluth, whenever I had a problem of any kind, there was always someone there willing to help.

7. Value of caring instructors. In my years of schooling, I have had several good instructors. However, never have I encountered four people that cared about or loved their subject matter more than the four of you. What that does for the learning situation is immeasurable. Thanks for the great example!

8. Value of humor. Many light-hearted humorous moments, cartoons, cards, and conversation heightened the beauty of the institute, and added to the memories that I will carry with me always. I loved the story Joe Maiolo read us, and will always remember the line "you phony—you studied." Marvelous!

9. Value of friendships formed. I met so many interesting people during my stay in Duluth—people from many different areas and backgrounds. I visited with them, studied with them, read with them, shopped with them, ate with them, laughed with them and cried with them. How can so much happen in three short weeks? With the intensity of the institute, I feel I got to know some of these people so well. The bonding that took place among everyone present was great. Because of this institute, I know I have gained some new lifelong friends.

10. Value of reading for pure pleasure—I have always loved to read, and this institute just reinforced that for me. Whether I am reading solely for pleasure, or for a deeper purpose and meaning—*Reading Is Fun!*

So how does all of this tie in with what I am doing now that I am back home in Aberdeen, South Dakota, teaching sixth graders? How does it carry over into my classroom?

First of all, my children read more than they ever have before, and I feel less guilt because I know how good it is for them. I feel they can learn many of the skills they need by reading and being read to. In order to instill in them a positive attitude about literature, I share with them my love of reading—verbally, and show them by example how important it is to me. There are two things that we do in my classroom every single day, without fail, regardless of how many interruptions there may be. I read aloud to the children and we all have a minimum of ten minutes of silent reading time. So far, I have read

aloud—*James and the Giant Peach, Bridge to Terabithia* and *Sara Plain and Tall.*

We still do worksheets and workbook pages, though far fewer than before. When discussing a story from our basal reader, I concentrate much less on right and wrong questions and answers, and much more on evaluative and creative thinking questions. I encourage them to talk more about what they read or what I read to them. I allow them the right to their own interpretations of what they read. With an opportunity to share it with others if they desire. When differences of opinion come up, we talk about why not everyone feels the same way—due to differences in our homes, families and backgrounds. I also stress that each of them is entitled to an opinion, even if it disagrees with someone elses.

Because some of the children have a difficult time expressing their opinions and ideas orally, I also allow them time every morning for journal writing. (That is the third thing we do absolutely every day!) Sometimes they write about whatever they want to write about; at other times I might give them a question to write about dealing with a book I am reading to them or perhaps a question about a story from their basal readers. For example, during the time I was reading them the book *Sara Plain and Tall*, which is a classic initiation story about a mail order bride, I asked them to tell me how they thought Sara felt, and how they might feel if they were Sara. One day I asked them if they thought Sara would stay or return to her homeland, and what they would do in the same situation.

Sometimes their journal entries deal with one of the items discussed on the news program we watch each morning. For example, when watching about the schools destroyed by Hurricane Hugo, they wrote about how they would feel if that happened to their school. And, last week, as we watched the destruction and carnage created by the earthquake in California, many of them wrote beautiful prayers asking God to be with the victims and their families.

The journal writing was difficult for many of the students at first. For many, it was something they had never done before, and they were apprehensive about sharing their feelings. However, as time goes by, and they learn to trust, they are opening up more and more. I feel the need to prove to them that I care about them, about what happens to them—both the good and the bad—and journaling gives them an opportunity to share with me many things they cannot or will not share orally.

Another way that I have brought to the classroom what I learned at the institute is that I talk less, and listen more. I try not to comment too much on what is said until all have had a chance to contribute, to avoid discouraging the students that are afraid of making a mistake. I try to help them to realize that all of their answers are acceptable. I encourage them to listen carefully to what their classmates are saying, and to be tolerant of opinions different from their own.

One thing that I am doing for the first time is to have all of the students read the same novel. I talked to the parents about this reader response approach at open house, and they were all very enthusiastic about the idea. (I assured them that it would be in addition to their regular reading classes—not instead of—in order to allay the fears!) Then I picked books from their book club order form—*Tom Sawyer* and *Old Yeller*—and sent a letter home to parents informing them of my choices. I let them know that the books were both in the book club order for the month if they would care to purchase them. Out of a total of forty-six copies needed, the parents purchased all but eight copies, and those I was able to purchase using Book Club Bonus Points. Both of the books arrived last week, so I am anxious to begin reading them with the students on Monday.

Because of my time spent in Duluth, I try to be more tolerant of all the children and their feelings, the happy, cheerful child, as well as the sullen, moody, frustrating one. I try to remember that often the children that are the hardest to love are the ones that need it the most.

Last but not least, I try to remember how important it is to retain a sense of humor about myself, and about the children I teach. I try to laugh with them, and share funny things with them. One of the books they have enjoyed the most this year is a very funny story—*James and the Giant Peach*—they loved it!

In closing, I would like to quote from Huck Finn . . . "Well, then, says I, what's the use of learning to do right, when it's troublesome to do right and ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same?" I feel my job, as a parent and an educator, is to teach children the values and rewards of doing right—even if it is troublesome—and help them to understand that the wages are not the same! Thanks to all of you, and Growing Up American, I feel better qualified and more confident about doing this.

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Institute Participants

Pamela Albert
Hettinger Public School
Hettinger, North Dakota

Susan Balke
Audubon Middle School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Sandra Barrett
Cambridge-Isanti School
Isanti, Minnesota

Ruth Boldan
Brainerd/Motley/Verndale Schools
Motley, Minnesota

Judie Bowes
New Effington School
New Effington, South Dakota

Lorraine Braun
Pittsville Elementary School
Pittsville, Wisconsin

Marcia DeGroote
Stanley Public School
Stanley, North Dakota

Julie Dermody, SSSF
St. John Nepomuk School
Racine, Wisconsin

Joann Dukart
Our Lady of Grace School
Edina, Minnesota

Rose Edington
St. Mary Help of Christ School
St. Cloud, Minnesota

James Fouts
Brodhead Middle School
Brodhead, Wisconsin

Joanne Goodrich
Central Elementary School
Lead, South Dakota

Marjorie Harr
Groton Elementary School
Groton, South Dakota

Carol Heib
Rosedale Colony School
Mitchell, South Dakota

Roberta Hendrickson
Oak Grove Intermediate School
Bloomington, Minnesota

D. Peter Hulke
Madison Elementary School
Marshfield, Wisconsin

Mary Johns
Mazomanie Elementary School
Mazomanie, Wisconsin

Estelle Krzykowski
Pittsville Elementary School
Pittsville, Wisconsin

Jill LaBatte
Solem Cannon Ball School
Bismark, North Dakota

Kathryn Lewis
St. Anne School
Bismark, North Dakota

Patricia Lund
Pike Lake Elementary School
Duluth, Minnesota

Johanna Martin
St. Bernard School
Fort Yates, North Dakota

Robert McKeown
Horace May Elementary School
Bemidji, Minnesota

Shirlie Moysis
Highmore Elementary School
Highmore, South Dakota

Barbara Nemec
Stephen Rural School
Highmore, South Dakota

Paulette Ozzello
Lincoln Park Elementary School
Duluth, Minnesota

Jeannie Pavlik
Pittsville Public School
Pittsville, Wisconsin

Carole Perry
Washington Elementary School
Ely, Minnesota

June Perry
Nettleton Magnet School
Duluth, Minnesota

Rose Prunty
Rice Lake Schools
Rice Lake, Wisconsin

Dorothy Roder
Holy Ghost School
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

Coco Roth
White River Elementary School
White River, South Dakota

Rudy Schleusner
River Heights Elementary School
Menomonie, Wisconsin

Diane Schaum
Epiphany School
Coon Rapids, Minnesota

Donna Swenson
Dresser Elementary School
Dresser, Wisconsin

Mary J. Webb
Roncalli Middle School
Aberdeen, South Dakota

Carolyn Werner
Audubon Middle School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Laurie Wig
Garfield Elementary School
Brainerd, Minnesota

Sara Wunderlich
Prairie View School
Agar, South Dakota

Frank Zych
Arlington Elementary School
Arlington, Wisconsin

★ ★ ★

Evaluator's Report

Rosa A. Smith, Ph.D., acted as the outside evaluator for the Growing Up American institute. Dr. Smith is Assistant Director for Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Studies, St. Paul, Minnesota, Public Schools. She based her evaluation on two questionnaires, two visits and interviews with selected participants and project directors.

Dr. Smith found that while Growing Up American participants were initially somewhat skeptical "of this incredible opportunity offered to elementary teachers," they came for the immediate attractions of money, graduate credit and a relatively short time commitment. Other, less tangible motivations included "the need for renewal, intellectual challenges, opportunity to interact with adult colleagues, and to be immersed in an academic environment just to read." The participants arrived at the College with some anxiety about their ability to be successful, but were also elated with the opportunity as well as the high level of expectations placed on them by the institute program.

Those anxieties quickly disappeared and by the second day, Dr. Smith "sensed the group's near explosive excitement, eagerness and readiness to form linkages within the group. This bonding was aided by the climate established at the beginning of the institute. Acceptance as is, trust, sensitivity, and respect developed in the first two days in a manner that relaxed participants and enabled them to set aside anxieties and plunge into the business of Growing Up American. It was at this point, that the instructors and participants sensed the electricity of the group and realized that something good was possible in this institute."

Dr. Smith's descriptive evaluations showed that participants:

Felt their expectations of Growing Up American had been fulfilled.

Were pleased with their skill development in critical reading and writing.

Thought the reading and writing were well-paced, if intense and taxing for some.

Developed new confidence in reading and interpreting literature.

Felt that maintaining a journal in the prescribed personal style was a valued experience.

Recognized that their ability to read literary texts had been enhanced as a result of the institute. Indeed, reading literature had changed significantly for the participants.

Dr. Smith concluded, "Growing Up American was an extraordinary experience for these forty people." The institute "achieved its purposes and outcomes in an exemplary manner in every aspect . . . This institute was more successful than the project directors and participants could ever have imagined. In every respect, it produced self-acclaimed positive results for the participants."

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